

Assemblyman Mark Leno, *Chair*
Assemblymember John Laird, *Vice-Chair*
Senator Sheila James Kuehl
Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg
Assemblymember Christine Kehoe



P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0013
(916) 319-2013, Fax (916) 319-2113
LGBT.Caucus@assembly.ca.gov
http://www.assembly.ca.gov/LGBT_Caucus

Eric Astacaan, *Consultant*

**CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, & TRANSGENDER (LGBT) CAUCUS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (#04-01) Contact: Shannan Velayas, 916-319-2013
Wednesday, February 25, 2004 cell: 916-271-2867

**LGBT CAUCUS UNVEILS RESOLUTION OPPOSING
DISCRIMINATORY FEDERAL CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT**

Resolution sponsored by Equality California

SACRAMENTO, CA -- The Legislative Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Caucus announced today that they are introducing a resolution opposing the proposed discriminatory amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would remove the lawmaking authority from states with regard to civil marriage. Separate measures were introduced in both the House of Representatives and the Senate last year to deny same-sex couples the right to marry, as well as prohibit legal recognition of these couples and their children.

"This is a dark day in American history," said Assemblyman Mark Leno, chair of the LGBT Caucus. "For the first time, a President has embraced codifying discrimination in our Constitution."

The resolution is jointly authored by the members of the Legislative LGBT Caucus. It was proposed by Equality California, formerly CAPE, the statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender civil rights advocacy organization, and drafted by the National Center for Lesbian Rights.

"This amendment would undermine legislative and legal efforts to protect all American families including gay and lesbian couples and their children," added Assemblymember John Laird (D - Santa Cruz), vice-chair of the LGBT Caucus.

"Now that our current President has officially announced that he wants to embed inequality born of prejudice in our national Constitution, it's more important than ever for California to stand up against hatred and discrimination. Our state has led the way in protecting equal rights and now our community and all its allies must speak up, loud and clear, in support of love, justice and the pursuit of happiness," stated Senator Sheila James Kuehl (D - Santa Monica).

Amending the federal Constitution is a complex and complicated process. Both the House and the Senate must first pass the amendment by a two-thirds majority vote. The amendment must then be ratified by three-quarters of the states.

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Opposing Discriminatory Constitutional Amendment
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"This amendment is nothing but an attempt by anti-gay extremists to keep treating LGBT Americans as second-class citizens and to be denied the equal protection of the law," noted Assemblymember Christine Kehoe (D - San Diego), past chair of the LGBT Caucus.

"There is nothing pro-family about this amendment," remarked Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg (D - Los Angeles). "It would deprive gay families fundamental protections such as hospital visitation rights, inheritance rights, and health care benefits."

"California has always been in the forefront in protecting individual rights," concluded Assemblyman Leno. "This joint resolution will send a strong message to the rest of the nation that this proposed amendment moves our society in the wrong direction."

The resolution will be introduced in the next few days and will be eligible to be heard by a policy committee in March 2004.

The California Legislative LGBT Caucus was originally formed in June 2002. The members include Assemblymember Mark Leno, Caucus Chair, Assemblymember John Laird, Vice-Chair, Senator Sheila James Kuehl, and Assemblymembers Jackie Goldberg and Christine Kehoe. The caucus' role is to present a forum for the California Legislature to discuss issues that affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Californians and to further the goal of equality and justice for all Californians. The LGBT Caucus' formation made California the first state in the country to recognize an official caucus of openly-LGBT state legislators.

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